

**Iowa**  
**Adoption Assistance- Who Do You Contact?**

**State Contact information**

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## **Adoption Assistance- Who is Eligible?**

Public adoption in Iowa is administered by the Department of Human Services (DHS). DHS and adoption links: [www.dhs.state.ia.us](http://www.dhs.state.ia.us), [www.iakids.org/](http://www.iakids.org/), and [www.dhs.state.ia.us/fostercarerecruitment/adoption1.asp](http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/fostercarerecruitment/adoption1.asp).

### **1. What specific factors or conditions does your state consider to determine that a child cannot be placed with adoptive parents without providing financial assistance? (*"What is your state definition of special needs?"*)**

A child with special needs is defined as a child that has at least one of the following needs or circumstances that may be a barrier to placement or adoption without financial assistance:

- Eight years of age or older and Caucasian
- Two years of age or older and a member of a minority race or ethnic group or the child of blended parentage (parents are of different races)
- Member of a sibling group of three or more children placed in the same adoptive home
- Medically diagnosed disability which substantially limits one of more major life activity, requires professional treatment, assistance in self-care, or the purchase of special equipment
- Diagnosed by a qualified mental health professional to have a psychiatric condition which impairs the child's mental, intellectual, or social functioning, and for which the child requires professional services
- Diagnosed by a qualified mental health professional to have a behavioral or emotional disorder characterized by situationally inappropriate behavior which deviates substantially from behavior appropriate to the child's age or significantly interferes with child's intellectual social and personal adjustment
- Determined to be mentally retarded by a qualified mental retardation professional

Note: Children must be legally free for adoption, in the guardianship of the state of Iowa, county, or a child placing agency licensed by the state immediately prior to adoption to be eligible for adoption assistance.

### **2. What are the eligibility criteria for your state-funded adoption assistance program?**

In order to be eligible for state-funded adoption assistance a child must meet be a special needs child as defined above, legally free for adoption, and in the guardianship of the state of Iowa, county, or a child placing agency licensed by the state immediately prior to adoption .

### **3. What is the maximum amount a family may receive in non-recurring adoption expenses in your state? Adoptive parents can receive reimbursement of certain approved, "one-time" adoption expenses incurred in the process of finalizing a special needs adoption.**

\$500.00 per child

### **4. Does your state enter into deferred adoption assistance agreements? In some states, adoptive parents can enter into an agreement in which they choose to defer the receipt of a Medicaid card, the monthly monetary payment, or both and can elect to receive the Medicaid card and/or monetary payment at another time.**

Iowa offers deferred adoption assistance. When a child is eligible for adoption assistance but assistance is not immediately needed by the child or family or when the child is at risk of being determined a child with special needs and assistance may be needed in the future, an Agreement to Future Subsidy (*Form 470-0762*) can be completed and retained by DHS for future reference. The adoptive family should also keep a copy of the Agreement to Future Subsidy, *Form 470-0762*, and a copy of the adoption petition and decree. These documents will be used by DHS as the basis for initiating the application for adoption assistance and negotiating an Adoption Subsidy Agreement in the future. For deferred adoption assistance, the adoption petition must contain language indicating that the child is at risk of developing problems in the future and the adoptive parents would desire financial assistance when the need arises.

## **5. When may adoption assistance payments and benefits begin in your state?**

Adoption assistance payments and benefits may begin in Iowa at adoption placement.

## **6. How are changes made to the adoption assistance agreement in your state?**

- a. When can a parent request a change in the adoption assistance agreement?
- b. How does a parent request a change in the adoption assistance agreement?
- c. What if a parent does not receive the change they request in the adoption assistance agreement?

An adoptive parent can request a change in an adoption assistance agreement whenever the needs of the child or the family's circumstances change. Across-the-board increases in adoption assistance payments are made when the Legislature approves cost-of-living adjustments. To initiate a change in the agreement, the adoptive parent should contact, in writing or by phone, the adoption unit located in the DHS Area Office in which the family resides. There is no established format for the change request. The DHS worker that responds to the family will specify what documentation is needed to support the change in order to make a determination regarding the request. The family will be provided with the decision regarding the request via the Adoption Notice of Decision, *Form 470-0745*. Appeal procedures, also known as fair hearings, are included on this Notice and parents can follow the information provided in the event the family disagrees with the decision and seeks a fair hearing. See Question #10 for a detailed explanation of the fair hearing process in Iowa.

Iowa's county DHS link: [www.dhs.state.ia.us/locations/locations.asp](http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/locations/locations.asp).

## **Adoption Assistance- Post Adoption Services**

## **7. What types of post adoption services are available and how do I find out more about them?**

Post adoption services in Iowa are administered by the Department of Human Services for children receiving adoption assistance and include the following examples:

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| 1. Information and Referral | 4. Connections to other adoptive families |
| 2. Educational Materials    | 5. Telephone support                      |
| 3. Training Opportunities   | 6. Support groups                         |

The Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parents Association (IFAPA) provides post adoption support through the Adoption Information Specialist (AIS) Program. The goal of the AIS Program is to strengthen and support new adoptive families that adopt children with special needs. The AIS Program provides services confidentially and free of charge. For more information on IFAPA post adoption services, link:

[www.ifapa.org/programs.html](http://www.ifapa.org/programs.html) or phone: 800.243.0756. Families can access services by contacting their local DHS office, link: [www.dhs.state.ia.us/dhsphone.asp](http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/dhsphone.asp) or phone: 800.972.2017.

Additional services may include the following:

1. Outpatient counseling or therapy services not covered by Medicaid
2. Medical services not covered by Medicaid (limited to an additional premium amount due to the child's special needs to include the child in the family's health insurance group if the family is not eligible for the Health Insurance Premium Payment (HIPP) Program for Iowa Medicaid Recipients. For more information regarding HIPP, phone: 888-346-9562).
3. Medical transportation not covered by Medicaid and the family's lodging and meals, if necessary, when the child is receiving specialized care or the child and family are required to stay overnight as part of a treatment plan
4. Supplies and equipment as required by the child's special needs and unavailable through other resources.
5. When a sibling group of three or more or placed together, a one-time only maximum payment of \$500 can be made to assist the family with transition expenses
6. Assistance with funeral expenses to a maximum of \$650 per child.

The following services are also available to adoptive families that meet specific program eligibility requirements:

Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPDST) is a federally funded program for children eligible for Medicaid. In Iowa the program is called EPSDT Care for Kids and families can obtain information by phone: 800.369.2229.

Early Access is a program for an infant or toddler under the age of three who has a condition or disability that is known to have a high probability of later delays if early intervention services are not provided and the child is already experiencing a 25 percent delay in one or more areas of growth and development. Information can be obtained at [www.state.ia.us/educate/ecese/cfcs/ea/index.html](http://www.state.ia.us/educate/ecese/cfcs/ea/index.html) or by phone: 800.779.2001.

The Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) Program is a waiver to Iowa's Medicaid program. Services are provided to assist persons to remain in their own homes or communities who would otherwise require care in medical institutions. The program has separate Medicaid waivers that include Mental Retardation, Brain Injury, Ill and Handicapped and AIDS/HIV. Information can be obtained by contacting DHS, phone: 515.281.5233 or e-mail: [ssstairs@dhs.state.ia.us](mailto:ssstairs@dhs.state.ia.us).

Community Mental Health Centers (CMHS) are available through out Iowa and may be accredited to provide any of the following services: Evaluation, Outpatient, Day Treatment, Partial Hospitalization, Intensive outpatient Treatment, Emergency Treatment, Psychiatric Rehabilitation, Support Community Living. To obtain a list of accredited Mental Health Centers, phone: call 515-281.5994.

Family-Centered Services are provided by DHS to address the needs and problems of children within the context of their families. Services are provided in the home and are available for children at risk for out-of home placement due to emotional or behavioral problems. Families may access these services by contacting their local DHS office. Locate the appropriate DHS office, link: [www.dhs.state.ia.us/dhsphone.asp](http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/dhsphone.asp) or phone: 800.972.2017.

Note: Not all services may be available in all cases. Contact your adoption assistance worker or post adoption services specialist for information regarding process, eligibility, availability, and duration of services.

## **Adoption Assistance- Medical Assistance**

### **8. What mental health services are provided by your state?**

Mental health services for children in Iowa are administered through the DHS Division of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities and include the following examples: inpatient hospital, outpatient hospital, prescription drugs, intermediate care facilities, clinics, psychologists, community mental health centers, genetic consultation clinics, day treatment, partial hospitalization, Area Education Agencies, Psychiatric Medical Institutions for Children, rehabilitative services for children, Home & Community Based Services through waivers. Iowa's mental health link: [www.dhs.state.ia.us/mhdd/](http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/mhdd/).

Note: Not all services may be available in all cases. Contact your adoption assistance worker or medical assistance specialist for information regarding process, eligibility, availability, and duration of services.

### **9. Does your state provide additional finances or services for medical or therapeutic needs not covered under your state medical plan to children receiving adoption assistance?**

Iowa does provide additional finances or services for medical or therapeutic needs not covered under their state medical plan. Reimbursement is available to adoptive families for children receiving adoption assistance for outpatient counseling or therapy services not covered by the Medicaid program; medical services not covered by the Medicaid program, limited to additional health insurance premium amounts (due to a child's special needs) necessary to include the child in the family's coverage plan medical transportation not covered by Medicaid, and the family's lodging and meals, if necessary, when the child is receiving specialized care; for the subsidy special services". Families can negotiate to have these services included in the Adoption Subsidy Agreement whenever the needs of the child or the family's circumstances change by contacting their local DHS area office.

Note: Not all services may be available in all cases. Contact your adoption assistance worker or medical assistance specialist for information regarding process, eligibility, availability, and duration of services.

## **Adoption Assistance- Fair Hearings**

### **10. What is your state's process for applying for a fair hearing? A fair hearing is a legal, administrative procedure that provides a forum to address disagreements with agency decisions.**

Adoptive parents can request a fair hearing whenever there is dissatisfaction with any action or failure to act with regard to an application for adoption services, services that the family is receiving, or because such assistance has been denied, reduced or terminated the family has the right to appeal (fair hearing). The request for fair hearing (also known as an appeal) must be in writing and sent or taken to the DHS office located in the family's county of residence. There is no specified format required for the appeal request letter. To get a hearing the family must file an appeal within thirty calendar days or before the effective date on the notice, whichever is greater. The family may obtain assistance in formulating the appeal request from the local DHS office.

The DHS will determine whether or not an appeal may be granted hearing. If a hearing is granted, the adoptive family will be notified of the time and place. If a hearing is not granted, the family will be notified

in writing of the reason and the procedures for challenging that decision. If an appeal hearing is granted, the family may explain their disagreement or have someone such as a relative or friend explain the disagreement for them. An attorney may represent the family, but this representation is at the family's expense. DHS will not cover attorney costs. The local county DHS office has information about legal services available to families that are based on a family's ability to pay (known as a "sliding scale fee"). Families may also contact the Legal Services Corporation of Iowa, phone: 800.532.1275. For questions regarding a specific fair hearing, families can call DHS collect, phone: 515.281.8774 or 515.281.3094.

To locate DHS offices, link: [www.dhs.state.ia.us/dhsphone.asp](http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/dhsphone.asp), or phone: 800.972.2017.

## **Adoption Assistance- Web/Internet Information**

### **11. What is your state Web address for general adoption information?**

Iowa's general adoption links: [www.dhs.state.ia.us/fostercarerecruitment/toc.asp](http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/fostercarerecruitment/toc.asp), [www.iakids.org/](http://www.iakids.org/), and Frequently Asked Questions: [www.iakids.org/adoption/faq.asp](http://www.iakids.org/adoption/faq.asp)

### **12. What is your state Web address for adoption assistance information?**

Iowa's adoption assistance link: [www.dhs.state.ia.us/fostercarerecruitment/adoption1.asp](http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/fostercarerecruitment/adoption1.asp)

### **13. What is your state Web address for state-specific medical assistance information for children?**

Iowa's state-specific medical assistance links: [www.cms.hhs.gov/medicaid/state.asp?state=IA](http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medicaid/state.asp?state=IA) and [www.dhs.state.ia.us/MedicalServices/MedicalServices.asp](http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/MedicalServices/MedicalServices.asp)